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ABSTRACT

The development of the research design for studying curriculum in the "A Study of Schooling" research project involved four problem areas. Defining and conceptualizing curriculum and how it works in different educational settings was a difficult, unwieldy task. Operationalizing the conceptual framework for studying curriculum so that researchers would not disrupt the test environment was also complex because the study's format included questionnaires, classroom observations, and interviews. Time, money, and staffing constraints were counterproductive and contributed to an atmosphere of anxiety. Appropriate use of part time staff and overcoming the territorial feelings of the research groups posed management problems in staff organization. As the study progressed, the perceptions of the research staff toward curriculum in the context of the study changed. One of the reasons for the change was circumstantial pressures due to limited resources. Some of the changes were due to the changing perceptions of the researchers themselves as they participated and grew with the project. In working toward the goal of productive educational research, the project helped to underscore two assumptions: (1) All research is essentially exploratory, regardless of methodology; and (2) Curriculum research is a necessary precursor to the process of curriculum criticism. (FG)

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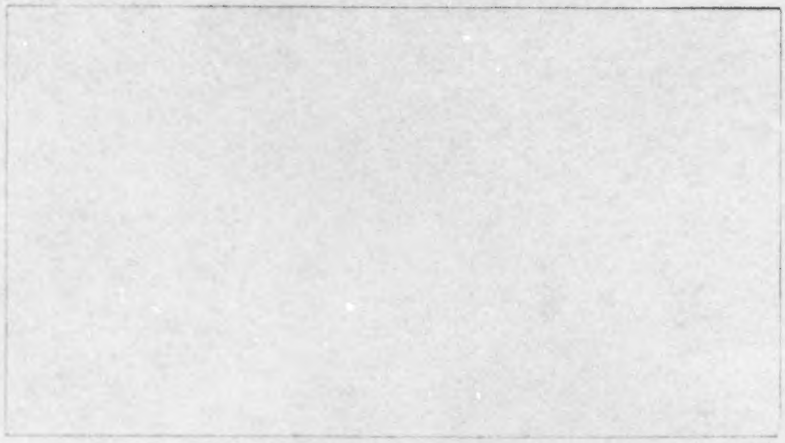
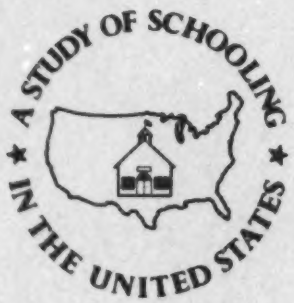
# A STUDY OF SCHOOLING

## Technical Report Series



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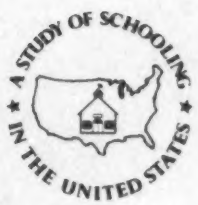


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# EXPERIENCING RESEARCH

Barbara J. Benham

Technical Report No. 8

1979

A Study of Schooling is based upon the assumption that improving schools requires knowing what is happening in and around them. A comprehensive data-base of contextual information was obtained from students, teachers, administrators, parents and observers at all grade levels in thirty-eight elementary and secondary purposively sampled schools. *It is strongly recommended that readers of any technical report in this series first read Technical Report No. 1 which outlines the details, scope and limitations of the Study as a whole.*

*It must be understood that this series of technical reports does not constitute the Study.* Some reports are highly specific "molecular" inquiries while others take a more "molar" view across data sources, schooling levels, etc. Some reports are more methodological in nature arising out of issues in data analysis. Many of the reports quite naturally overlap in data analysed and interpretations rendered. Some authors have approached their task as consisting mostly of data description with little discussion beyond the presentation of the data. Others have ventured further into the realm of interpretation and speculation. *It must be further understood that data-based inferences can and do differ among researchers who come at the data from differing points-of-view.* Authors, therefore, are duly acknowledged for each report and are responsible for the material presented therein.

PREFACE: SOME THOUGHTS ABOUT RESEARCH

It is becoming fashionable to speak of "exploratory" research, as opposed to "confirmatory" research, as if this distinction reflected some true dichotomy within research activity itself. I contend, however, that all research is "exploratory." The idea that it can be "confirmatory" is largely a myth, nurtured by the peculiar sociopolitical and cultural circumstances of the 20th century. It has created serious misunderstandings and, in some cases, unreasonable expectations concerning both the purposes and the outcomes of inquiry.

In social science research, the notion that inquiry can be "confirmatory" gives the impression that prediction and control not only can be achieved vis-a-vis human beings' behavior and experience, but that they are desirable. Furthermore, adoption of the classical experimental framework for inquiry perpetuates a number of erroneous assumptions: first, that human behavior can and should be studied in bits and pieces; second, that a group of people exposed to a certain event ("treatment") all have the same experience thereby; and third, that human experience can be precisely replicated.

I would like to propose that the notions of uncertainty, relativity, and chance may come closer to providing us with a reasonable set of assumptions about the possibilities of social science research. These notions have the added virtue of reminding the researcher always to be humble about his expectations. The principle of uncertainty suggests that "truth" is elusive, absolute control is impossible, and we cannot always be sure in advance of an outcome. The idea of relativity reminds

us that human experience is essentially personal, that all data about it are subjective--based on perceptions--and that even simple events can have very different meanings for separate individuals. The notion of chance, or the statistical concept of "margin of error," warns us that even tightly controlled conditions may yield unexpected results.

As far as I am concerned, then, the most sensible attitude for all to take regarding research is that it is, at bottom, the search for understanding: an exploration. The methods used may differ; and in fact, if there is any value in the designations "exploratory" and "confirmatory" it is not that they imply some fundamental distinction as to purpose, but only that they reflect some ways in which the search may be undertaken.

EXPERIENCING RESEARCH

## The Relationship of Research to Curriculum Theorizing

John Steven Mann has pointed out that the role of the curriculum "critic" is to observe the practitioner and to point out the patterns that may be discerned in the choices made by the practitioner, making his ethical judgment of those patterns clear as he does so (Mann, 1975).

It seems to me that curriculum criticism requires curriculum research; the research is the observation, the asking, and the listening by which the patterns of choices are revealed, and the criticism is the judgment made of them. A person cannot be a critic without having first been a researcher: as researcher, he observes patterns; as critic, he applies his ethical framework to the patterns and in so doing he discerns what he takes to be their "meanings."

Two assumptions, then, underlie this paper: first, that research is essentially exploratory, regardless of its methodology--a search for insight and understanding--and second, that curriculum research is a necessary first step in the process of curriculum criticism. In this way, empirical inquiry (in the broadest sense of the term, which can encompass the phenomenological approaches) can illuminate theory and inform criticism, and the close relationship between curriculum research and curriculum theorizing may be understood and valued.

The purpose of this paper is to present and discuss a number of problems encountered in the process of researching curriculum. The examples used to illustrate these problems will be drawn from the experiences of John Goodlad and his research staff during the course of the "Study of Schooling." Four fundamental problem areas will be discussed: conceptualizing curriculum;

"operationalizing" the conceptual framework; ways in which time, money, and staffing constraints influence curriculum research; and issues of staff organization, interaction, and allocation of tasks and the ways in which these can help or hinder the research process. The paper will conclude with a discussion of some of the ways in which the conceptualization of curriculum changed during the course of the Study.

The Study of Schooling: Some Background Information

The Study of Schooling is a major descriptive research project that has been under way for the past five years. The idea for the Study originated when John Goodlad and his associates realized that, throughout the 60's, prescriptions for educational improvement were commonly being formulated by educators and policymakers who, in fact, did not really know what was going on in schools. No methodology had been developed for studying the school in its entirety; and the many reliable and valid techniques developed for studying separate aspects of schooling would not, if put all together, reveal to us a whole school (Goodlad, 1977).

And so the Study of Schooling began in 1972. Initially, there was some debate as to the purpose of the Study: some felt that the development of a sound descriptive methodology would be the most important contribution the Study could make; others seemed more interested in going beyond the description to develop techniques for using the findings as an intervention tool for school improvement. Ultimately, "to describe in as much detail as possible what actually occurs in a selected sample of schools"-- letting the reader or listener draw his own conclusions about the meanings of the findings--remained the primary purpose.* Learning how people in school

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* From a proposal presented to the National Science Foundation by the staff of the Study of Schooling; January, 1977.

settings, particularly students and teachers, feel about their lives in schools, was an important part of this purpose. However, the findings for each participating school/community are being returned to that school/community to be used or not, as the people there might see fit. It is, thus, possible that local decisions for school change may eventually be an outcome of the Study as well.

Chronological Overview of the Study of Schooling

During 1973 and much of 1974, the basic task was the conceptual one: in effect, how could the school and its community be studied as a systemic whole--where does one begin? Then in late 1974 and throughout 1975, the task involved operationalizing the conceptual framework. This included developing and field-testing questionnaires, interview formats, and observation instruments, and constantly evaluating and revising these as their various strengths and weaknesses became evident. A full-scale pilot study at the end of 1975 revealed still other changes and improvements needed, not only in the instrumentation but also in data collection methodology and logistical arrangements. The whole of 1976 was devoted to these tasks and to making the final preparations for the actual data collection, scheduled to begin in early 1977.

During 1977, data was gathered at 13 "triples"* in seven states representing major geographic regions of the country for a total of 38 schools in all. A month was spent in each location, with teams of from 21 to 30 at each site. Most of the data collectors were local people who had been specially hired and trained to help with the questionnairing,

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* A "triple" consisted of a high school, a feeder junior high or middle school, and a feeder elementary school. At one location, the secondary school included grades 7 through 12, hence a total of 38 rather than 39 schools.

interviewing, and observing. The 38 schools represent a variety of different communities: black, brown, white, and mixed ethnically; low, middle, and upper middle class in terms of socioeconomic status; and urban, suburban, and rural locations geographically. (Despite the fact that an effort was made to study schools in many different kinds of communities, however, the Study of Schooling is being careful not to generalize its findings beyond the sample. The most we will do is to say, "this is how things were in the schools we studied.")

Now it is 1978. The data are in, and being analyzed. Interesting patterns are being noticed and explored. The staff is deep into the task of organizing the material for final reports. The writing will begin this Summer, and findings will emerge in various forms--as articles, monographs, and books--through 1979 and beyond. The Study of Schooling will eventually wind down and its staff members will go on to pursue other interests. But the techniques developed may be used by others, and the findings themselves may provide the basis for countless doctoral dissertation ideas and other research projects. Research--inquiry--does not end just because a particular study is brought to a conclusion. Exploration goes on.

## Researching Curriculum in the Study of Schooling: Four Problem Areas

### 1. Conceptualizing "Curriculum"

When one decides to take a look at how curriculum actually works out there in the schools, one must begin with an idea of what curriculum is. This is by no means as easy as it sounds, even for people who have made curriculum work the focus of their careers, and who know a lot about it. The Study staff began by discussing ways in which people find various

things important. This quickly led to the realization that there actually may be no such thing as "the" curriculum: what it is perceived to be depends on whom you ask. For this reason, no single definition was made explicit at the beginning of the Study, and the group instead proceeded to identify five fundamental perspectives from which curriculum may be viewed: ideal, formal, instructional, operational, and experiential.

IDEAL: The "ideal" curriculum would be that seen as highly desirable by curriculum specialists. Admittedly, this is an abstraction, about which there rarely seems to be consensus, even among experts within the same subject area. One immediately realizes the difficulty of pinning down such an elusive construct, and in fact, as the Study proceeded this was one area which was not explored in the depth originally envisioned.

FORMAL: The "formal" curriculum consists of the expectations of "persons or groups in authority" such as legislatures, state departments of education, district officials, and so forth. The formal curriculum is "official," and it is written down, in the form of state and district guidelines, curriculum guides, and statements of goals and objectives. "It is in the formal curriculum that society's interests are usually embedded," (Goodlad, 1979, p.61).

INSTRUCTIONAL: The "instructional" curriculum is that which the teacher perceives or believes he or she is offering to the students, and it is shaped by the value screens, professional competencies, and interests of the teacher as well as by the teacher's assessment of the students' needs, interests, abilities, and expectations.

OPERATIONAL: "There is some evidence which indicates that a gap exists between what a teacher perceives he is doing and what he actually does" (Klein, 1975). The fourth perspective of what curriculum is would,

then, be the "operational" curriculum--that is, what is actually being done in the classroom, as perceived and recorded by trained observers.

EXPERIENCED: The fifth perception is, of course, that of the student. "Students respond to curricula intended and to curricula not intended, in ways both intended and unintended. There is, then, a personal curriculum, unique to each student" (Goodlad, 1979, p.28).

Originally, the Study focused largely on the intended curriculum. Some of the patterns emerging in the data, however, seem able to yield some insight into the workings of the unintended, or hidden, curriculum.

An important aspect of the original conceptualization of curriculum, then, was this understanding that a great deal depends on who is doing the looking. Equally important has been the belief that there are certain "commonplaces" of curriculum--elements that are generally present in classrooms. If the five perspectives indicate whom you ask, the commonplaces indicate what you ask about. The resulting grid suggests that a researcher might wish to question each of the five data sources about each of the nine "commonplaces:"

| | IDEAL | FORMAL | INSTRUCTIONAL | OPERATIONAL | EXPERIENTIAL |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | curriculum experts | state & district mandates & guidelines | the teacher | trained observers | the student |
| goals & objectives | | | | | |
| materials | | | | | |
| content | | | | | |
| learning activities | | | | | |
| strategies | | | | | |
| evaluation | | | | | |
| grouping | | | | | |
| time | | | | | |
| space | | | | | |

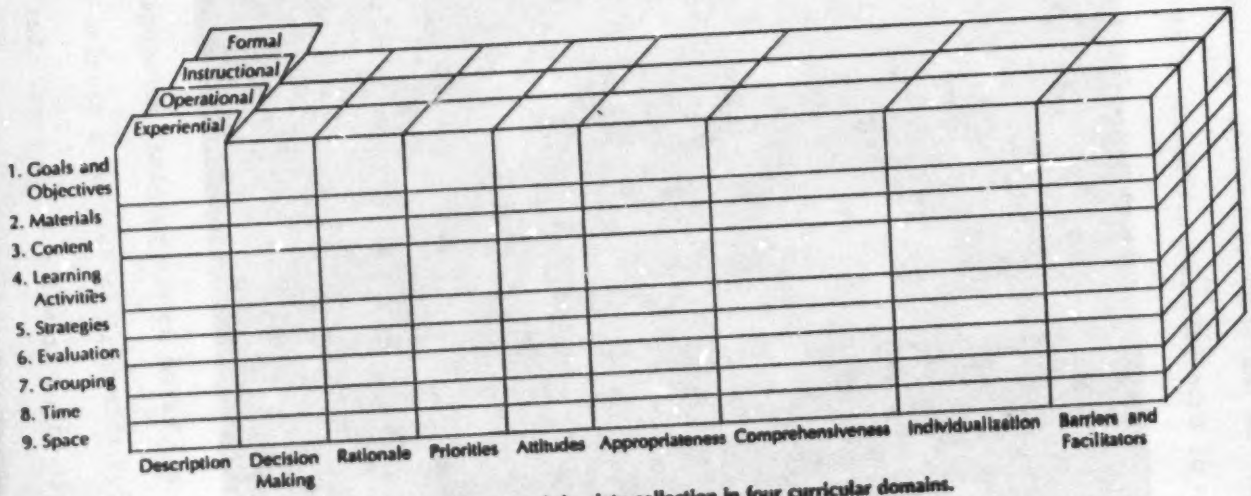
This diagram represents the conceptualization of curriculum as it stood during the Summer of 1974. The acknowledged purpose of the curriculum substudy, at that point, was "...to document the areas of agreement and areas of discrepancy among the various perspectives" (Klein, 1975). In other words, the intention (or hope!) was that the Study would be able to pin down ways in which the curriculum as students experience and perceive it differs from the one the observers see, how what the observers see differs from what the teacher believes or perceives himself to be doing, whether what the teacher perceives that he is doing differs from what the curriculum guides and school board directives contain, and finally, if the curriculum guides and school board directives differ from expert opinion of curriculum specialists as to what the curriculum should be or contain. The catch-phase used by the staff to refer to this ambitious project was, "tracing the slippage." This initial purpose has, over the past four years, been modified to some extent. For example, the difficulty of pinning down the "ideal" curriculum has already been mentioned: even experts in, say, Science Education do not agree on what the ideal Science curriculum should look like.

Ironically, it was a conceptual extension of the framework that may have contributed most to shifting the focus away from tracing the slippage between the five perspectives and toward a simpler focus on the perspectives themselves: during the Fall of 1974, a set of qualitative dimensions was formally added to the conceptual framework. These were elements such as decision-making (who is perceived to have decision-making power?) appropriateness (are there differences between the data sources as to perceived curricular appropriateness?) and so forth. The addition of these qualitative dimensions to the conceptualization resulted

in an enormously complex grid which had the virtue of being very comprehensive as far as thinking about curriculum was concerned, but the drawback of being very bulky as far as research methodology was concerned (see next page). "When all perspectives, curricular elements and qualitative factors were applied to the subject areas...it became obvious that there were in excess of 500 potential questions to be answered in order to get a comprehensive picture of a school's curricula. We were into the classic dilemma of descriptive research," Goodlad observes.

Several of the people who were involved with this curriculum work in the early part of the Study have said that, in looking back over the past four or five years, it was actually conceptualizing curriculum--getting a mental grasp of what it is--that was one of the hardest things to do.

At any rate, the grid on the following page represents the conceptual framework used by the Study of Schooling staff to begin asking some research questions about curriculum. Whether or not it actually constituted a "model" has been a point of some disagreement based, it seems, on differing interpretations of what a model can do or definitions of what a model must be able to do. Insofar as a model should be functional--that is, should suggest patterns of relationship, indicate the relative importance of its various elements, and help to separate the critical questions from the less critical ones--this does not seem to be a model. For it soon became apparent that the grid itself provided the staff with little or no clues as to which cells would yield critical and important research questions and which cells would yield comparatively trivial research questions. During the closing months of 1974, the staff




Framework for data collection in four curricular domains.

worked hard to generate meaningful research questions for every cell. There was ongoing discussion as to what were, and are, the pressing curriculum questions and issues; and there was an effort to select, from those questions which were generated, those felt to be potentially most powerful. As the Study proceeded, various constraints caused some re-evaluation of this grid and ultimately a good number of questions were removed, leaving some cells empty. These decisions not to seek certain information were based on intuitive, commonsense judgments about what would be most important to know and what least important, and not on the use of any specific theoretical model or rationale superimposed on the grid.

Conceptualizing curriculum, then, was exceedingly difficult. Even now, the staff from time to time will discover that its members still do not share a common understanding of each aspect of the conceptual framework; but then, that's the nature of the beast. It just won't lie down and allow itself to be neatly tagged. The understanding of meanings is highly personal, and language is not always able to adequately capture and transmit them. Furthermore, the understanding of meanings changes with new experience, and if now the "experiential curriculum" or "goals"--or any of the categories on the grid--means more than it did five years ago, that is not surprising. Problems may arise when the staff applies new understandings, in the form of redefined constructs, differently defined constructs, or perhaps even entirely new ways of looking, to data which were collected based on the original meanings of those constructs. The extent to which this will in fact be a problem in the case of this particular research effort remains to be seen. But it is a complication worth noting for others who may embark on long-term curriculum research, for it may be unavoidable.

2. Operationalizing the Conceptual Framework

If conceptualizing was difficult for some, operationalizing was ten times more difficult for many. Students, parents, teachers, community people, school district staff, school principals, and non-teaching professionals were all to be reached by the Study. How could the most important information be gathered within the time available at each site? The research methods used were, basically, asking (using both questionnaires and interviews) and observing. All through the first half of 1975, then, instruments were being developed, field-tested, and modified. By the end of that Summer, everyone connected with the Study was getting ready for a full-scale pilot study, scheduled to begin in October.

It would take an entire book to do a thorough job of telling this part of the story, for operationalizing a set of "ideas"* about schools, for purposes of research, is certainly the most complex process of all, and the most crucial: the delicate link between researcher and phenomenon. With that said, however, I believe it is important to refer, albeit all too briefly, to four issues that seem to stand out within this problem area.

The first of these concerns the matter of gathering anecdotal data and the use of open-ended questions. Originally, many of the curriculum questions were asked in this way, but the field testing and pilot study experiences showed that this approach would be unbelievably cumbersome. As one staff member puts it, "No teacher would take the questionnaire we

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* It is worth noting here that, in this case, "ideas" does not indicate pre-formed hypotheses or statements of what the Study staff expected to find. Such an approach was deliverately eschewed by Goodlad, and he has had some difficulty convincing many of his more traditional audiences that research can, indeed, begin without hypotheses!

came up with!" Not only that, but the amassing of large quantities of anecdotal data and open-ended responses would put great strain on the staff when the time came to analyze the data: the capacities of the Study in this regard were limited by constraints common to this kind of research: too little time, too little money, and too few people to do all that needs to be done.

The second issue, then, concerns the extent to which curriculum questions can be asked within a limited-choice format without somehow changing the original intention of the questioner or, as Goodlad puts it, "the sheer hard work of translating the conceptual framework into researchable form that would preserve its essence."

While it is true that some questions were dropped during this process ("If changing from open to closed format seemed to alter the essence of the original question, sometimes it was deleted instead. Elimination of items was a thoughtful process," one staff member recalls), the amount of data that was collected is enormous--almost overwhelming. Curriculum questions can be asked, then, in a variety of formats, including limited-choice. And unless a research project has massive amounts of money, a large and versatile staff, and excellent data analysis capabilities, a study of this size based exclusively or primarily on anecdotal data would not be feasible.

The third issue within the problem area of operationalizing concerns the use of interviews, and this of course is related to the questions of open-ended and limited-choice format mentioned above. Further, at a deeper level all of these "operationalizing" issues are a function of the philosophical grounding of the researcher; but that's a topic for another time. In the case of this Study, the staff members shared a great

interest in doing as much interviewing as possible; in letting people in school settings tell about what they do and how they feel about it in their own words. During the field testing and pilot testing phases, much interviewing was done--of students, teachers, and principals. Aside from the problems mentioned above in connection with the coding and analysing of anecdotal and open-ended data (the time, the money, and the personnel this task requires), other problems arose out of the interviewing process. For example, the unevenness of interviewing skills among those doing the interviewing. Listening to someone talk about his life in school seems like an easy matter--until you try to do it. Entering the life of a student or a teacher in this kind of a way takes not only certain kinds of skills, but more importantly a special sensitivity and it is unlikely that all the members of an interviewing team would have these qualities and abilities in equal measure. This unevenness of skill and sensitivity can have unexpected consequences. In this Study, some of the interviewers had some difficulty in communicating with younger children. Others encountered suspicion and distrust in the older children; they were likely as not to say, "I ain' gon' tell you nuthin' " as a matter of course, to any adult who might try to engage them in a conversation about their feelings. And then there were some students who just seemed so taken aback that an adult would even be interested enough to ask about their experiences, opinions, and feelings, and even though it made them feel good to be asked, their responses were rather guarded. All in all, the results of student interviews were disappointing, especially as the Study staff was so aware of the importance of this kind of information. Individual staff members have said that if they could do the study over again, they would reconsider the whole notion of comprehensive research, rely

primarily on expert observers and interviewers, and work in a smaller number of locations, over a longer period of time--in short, move in the direction of one of the ethnographic methodologies. At any rate, the use of student interviews was dropped (much of the information sought was also covered in the student questionnaires, however) and the teacher and principal interviews were shortened.

The fourth issue within this general problem area involves the development of an observation instrument. For a complex set of reasons, the framework for meaningful observation of classroom phenomena did not seem to get the attention it deserved until fairly late in the operationalizing phase. It is one staff member's perception that the staff more or less avoided dealing with the observation task until it became clear that the Study would not be able to contend with anecdotal data in the volume originally planned. Then, all of a sudden, observation seemed more important. Just a few weeks before the pilot study, the task of designing an observation instrument was tackled by one staff member, with help from one or two of the others. The instrument thus hurriedly designed was used in the pilot study and, all things considered, was more successful than anticipated. Still, it was cumbersome to use, and the reliability and validity were questionable.

After the pilot, therefore, the staff began searching for another observation instrument that could be used. The one developed by the Stanford Research Institute was chosen, because it was available, trainable, analyzable, and seemed to cover enough of the classroom domain to be useful. Modifications, however, were needed. A former SRI staff member was hired and helped the Study staff to adapt the SRI observation instrument for use at all grade levels (it is ordinarily used only at the

elementary level) and in such a way that it would reflect (a) subject area being studied by the class, and (b) various kinds of classroom activities other than instruction--routine, social, and "behavior" (discipline). The information about classroom interaction revealed by the adapted instrument is fairly comprehensive, quite complex, and even, in some ways, subtle. And there is an unbelievable amount of it: in all, over 1,000 classrooms were observed three times each.

As with interviewing, then, the experience of those involved in this particular research effort suggests that classroom observation is essential to a comprehensive look at what happens in schools, but is a complex activity requiring much serious thought at all levels, from the philosophical (for example, do observers miss something they aren't looking for just because it isn't part of their frame of reference? If so, what? And why?) to the purely mechanical (how can classroom observation be managed in such a way as to minimally disrupt or alter the environment? How can observation be scheduled so as to include a variety of classrooms? What arrangements need to be made with teachers, and other adults?). Above all, we must bear in mind that what an observer sees and records is no more "true," no more "objective," than any other perception of what is happening in that classroom. It is simply another perception, to be considered on an equal footing with the perceptions of the teachers and students who were also in the room.

3. Time, Money, and Staffing Constraints

The cost of descriptive research, if it is to be done well, is phenomenal. This would be true even in the best of times--and the Seventies haven't been the best of times.

> From a funding standpoint, our timing could not have been worse. Confidence in educational research among public and private funding agencies was at a low ebb. Most foundation were finding themselves hard pressed to meet existing commitments from declining portfolios. Some executives who had encouraged us--in fact, who contributed significantly to my decision to go ahead in the first place--were forced to back away...(Goodlad, 1977, p.5).

Even curriculum people who are embarking upon fairly modest ethnographic studies will be surprised at the expenditures encountered which were not anticipated beforehand, not to mention funds promised but not delivered for whatever reasons. Originally, the Study of Schooling hoped to cover 72 schools. As the Study proceeded, budget cutbacks caused this number to be cut to 38. Other economies were necessary: the number of observation days per classroom was cut from 5 to 3, the number of interviewers to be hired was cut, and a search for the exemplar models of curriculum (the "ideal" curriculum mentioned on pages 6 to 8) was abandoned. These are only three of numerous examples. The Study staff itself had to be cut, which meant that the work formerly done by approximately 48 full and part-time people had to be done by around 28 to 30. At one point in the Study, many staff members were putting in 80-hour weeks, almost literally never going home.

Adding to the problem of overwork was the continual drain of energy into the writing of new proposals, in an attempt to locate added funding from other sources. This work had to go on, side by side with the actual work of the Study itself, but its results were not very encouraging.

With a consistent and reliable source of full and adequate funding, and the staff at full strength for the entire duration of the project, possibly the pressures of time would not have been so keenly felt. As it was, however, there has never seemed to be enough time in which to do

all that needs to be done. This kind of time-pressure can have a consequence worth noting: people can get caught up in what one staff member calls "the momentum of pragmatic decisions" and lose their sense of perspective all too easily in the face of day-to-day pressures. Serious intellectual and philosophical dialogue, equally important for a staff engaged in this type of research, tends to get indefinitely postponed.

These kinds of problems contributed to an atmosphere of anxiety which was more tangible at some times than at others, but which almost certainly was counterproductive. What has been achieved even under such conditions of tension and frequent uncertainty is rather remarkable.

4. Issues of Staff Organization

Two issues of staff organization stand out in the experience of this particular project. The first of these involves what came to be called the "substudy versus the total-school approach" controversy, and reflects the tendency of people engaged in comprehensive research to develop territorial feelings about their own areas of responsibility, losing sight of the project as a whole.

By the Fall of 1974, the Study of Schooling staff had grouped itself into five task groups, each focusing on a different subsection of the whole. Not everyone had felt that the small-group approach would be appropriate, but there was simply too much to be done for each individual to be involved in all aspects of the Study. Goodlad, in his position as Director, felt that possibly more creativity would be generated within smaller working groups; he hoped that this could happen without losing the "whole-school" comprehensive focus, but unfortunately things didn't work out that way. "...the five groups began to feel pressure to come up with their own conceptual frameworks, and having done that, they then

tended to become defensive about them in discussions," Goodlad recalls. What had happened, in effect, was that five task groups had developed territorial feelings and many individuals involved in one or another of the substudies subsequently had great difficulty in re-establishing a sense of how their own work could or should fit back into the whole.

The second issue of staff organization which was important in this Study involves the appropriate and productive use of part-time staff. There are advantages and disadvantages to having both full-time and part-time people in a research organization. Hiring two half-time people instead of one full-time person may bring a wider range of skills into the group, for example. On the other hand, part-time people cannot give their full attention to just the one project; nor can they all necessarily be on hand at the same time. Scheduling thus becomes a problem. These kinds of problems can cause frustration for full-time and part-time people alike, and over the last five years quite a few part-time staff have left the Study, some out of frustration and some because they had other commitments or interests which drew them more strongly. Thus turnover in personnel also becomes a problem: in a complex project, how can continuity be maintained? How can new staff people be helped to "learn the project," to become part of the ongoing effort, contributing their own skills, perspectives and understandings to the whole?

These two issues--the matter of developing group territoriality and the problems posed by the use of part-time staff--represent creative challenges to the management, not only of research, but of any ongoing group requiring cooperative decision-making.

These, then, are four of the areas in which the experiences of the staff of the Study of Schooling and the lessons learned may be of interest or of use to others: the difficulties of conceptualization; the intricacies of operationalizing the conceptual framework; time, money, and personnel constraints; and issues of staff organization.

## EPILOGUE: ONE OBSERVERS'S VIEW OF SOME OF THE WAYS IN WHICH THE CONCEPTUALIZATION OF CURRICULUM CHANGED DURING THE COURSE OF THE STUDY OF SCHOOLING

It seems to me that there were two kinds of forces which acted to change the way in which the Study staff members think about curriculum within the context of this particular project. The first of these were the circumstantial pressures described in this paper--the constraints of time, money, and personnel, the issues of staff organization and interaction, and the process of operationalizing a conceptual framework in particular. The second was the result of the changing perceptions of the researchers themselves: as the Study progressed, those involved with it grew and learned and thought and read, and tested new understandings and ideas about curriculum in discussions with each other and with others, and had new experiences in school settings--in other words, they lived through the project and grew with it, and they are not the same people today that they were in May of 1973. All of which seems obvious, perhaps; but it is a point not often explored--or even mentioned--in discussions of the nature of inquiry. Nor do I have time to explore it here in the detail which I believe it deserves. But I do want to close this paper by pointing out a few of the changes in curriculum thinking within this Study which resulted from these two forces: the circumstantial pressures and the changing awarenesses of the researchers themselves.

### Some of the Changes Caused by Circumstantial Pressures

The effort to establish an "ideal" curriculum for every subject area was soon abandoned. As has been mentioned, consensus among experts is rare and in view of that, it seemed that the time and money required to bring experts together for that purpose could be put to better use in other areas of the Study. The "formal" curriculum, also, was not pursued

in quite the depth originally envisioned. It sometimes proved difficult to get curriculum documents for every subject area from all the agencies which develop them: State legislatures, State Departments of Education, Intermediate Agencies such as Regional Service Centers, School Districts, and school or departmental curriculum committees. The existence of written materials at these various levels varies from state to state and between school districts within a state, so comparisons across the entire sample would be difficult. And then, of course, if such materials were collected for every site, from each of those agencies, for every subject area and grade level, the quantity of material to be analyzed would be staggering--after the budget cuts of early 1976, the smaller staff simply couldn't handle it all. Such formal curriculum documents as were collected are being analyzed, but the original intention to really pin this down in great detail has been much modified.

Some of the qualitative factors on the original curriculum framework were not pursued at all (rationale, priorities, and comprehensiveness), others were only partially explored (barriers and facilitators, individualization), and the rest were studied perhaps adequately, but not as fully as many staff members would have liked (attitudes, appropriateness, and decision-making). These modifications were probably in large measure made as a result of on-site pressures relating to the research methods being used (for instance, the amount of time that teachers, students, and others were willing to give to the research process). There is little doubt that limitation of funds and the consequent limitation of personnel also played a part in the inability of the staff to give full attention to all of the qualitative factors as well as to the other elements of the conceptual framework.

As exploration of the ideal and formal curricula was curtailed, the focus shifted, increasingly, to a study of the instructional, operational, and experiential curricula--that is, to the teacher, observer, and student perceptions of curriculum. This is not to say that these were fully explored, however. Some of the problems that led to the decision not to do student interviews have already been mentioned. Other problems arose which led to other decisions to modify the scope of inquiry into student, teacher, or observer perceptions of experience. For example, classes of EMR, EMH, and EH students proved very difficult to study, and eventually the decision was made to exclude Special Education classes from the sample. The experiences of students and teachers in various kinds of Special Education settings could be the focus of an entirely new study, one very much worth doing. This example illustrates one of the ways in which the Study of Schooling will contribute ideas for the generation of further and deeper research into lived school experience.

Some Changes Perceived to be the Result of the Changing Perceptions of the Researchers Themselves

I see three shifts of interest reflected in the current (Spring, 1978) staff discussions of the curriculum data, which I believe can be traced to the growth of the staff members themselves during the course of the Study. The first of these is a deepening interest in the experience of being a student, or a teacher and, in connection with this, a growing tendency to want to explore the hidden curriculum: what it is, how it may differ from one community to another, how it is transmitted, to what extent it may be recognized by students somehow, and so forth. Originally, the curriculum conceptualization focused primarily on the manifest curriculum--"a set of intended learnings," subject matter, and the like.

There has been a distinct shift in the direction of a broader conceptualization of curriculum, one which includes the unintended learnings. "Students respond to curricula intended and to curricula not intended, in ways both intended and unintended" (Goodlad, 1979, p.28).

The second shift is toward greater interest in the sociopolitical aspects of schooling, the role played by schools in shaping students to play roles in a certain kind of society, and the fact that "knowledge cannot be divorced from human interests," as Macdonald puts it (Macdonald, 1972, p. 5). This interest has manifested itself in recent months through what I tend to identify as "theme-testing." Some staff members have articulated themes which they would like to see dealt with in the final reports emerging from the Study. Then, in order to see if this would be possible, they delve into the data that has been accumulated to see whether what we have is both appropriate and sufficient to permit the incorporation of a theme into a discussion of the Study findings.

Themes may be stated as questions. For example, to what extent does the information we have collected reveal that students are encouraged to be passive rather than actively involved in their environment? Upon "testing" one discovers that there is information about classroom activities, materials, teaching style and practices, and opportunities for student decision-making. There are both student and teacher perceptions of these, and observer perceptions of some of them. Patterns may emerge here and in connection with other aspects of the data, which indeed shed some light on the degree to which student passivity is encouraged and the ways in which this message is communicated to students.

Another theme might concern ways in which schools participate in replication of the social and economic order. Turning to the data, we

find that at one high school with a 97% nonwhite population, the curriculum is over 50% vocational. At another school, in an almost exclusively blue-collar community, the curriculum is primarily college preparatory. What does this mean to the people in those communities? To the students in those schools? To the teachers? One must dig further into the data to learn, for example, whether the students feel that they are or are not getting what they need from their school experience; whether the parents agree or disagree, and so forth. All this is theme-testing.

Here's another: what, if anything, can our data reveal to us about the unequal distribution of knowledge in the schools we studied? A probe of the data shows that we might be able to learn quite a bit about this at several levels. At one very simple level, analysis of high school mathematics materials submitted by math teachers reveals quite distinctly that college prep students are not being taught certain very useful survival skills: it is those who are not college-bound who learn how to fill out their tax forms, claim deductions, understand how mortgages work, and all about insurance, and credit, and social security, and so forth. What lies behind the curriculum decision-making that created this inequality? What might be some of its social implications?

My point here has been to exemplify the growing interest within the Study of Schooling staff in the sociopolitical aspects of schooling and to interest the reader in the ways in which some of the findings of this Study may illuminate some of their own concerns or theories in this realm.

The third shift of interest or understanding regarding curricular phenomena which I believe to be related to the growth of the researchers during the Study is at once more simple and more profound than the two already mentioned. It is the deepening awareness of the complexity and

the non-linearity of curricular phenomena. There seems to be an increased focus on transactional activity at all levels and a wish to see the schools and the communities in which they exist as ecologically interrelated. In a recent address, Goodlad saluted the growing interest in ethnography as a basic mode for educational research, but warned of the danger that the results of ethnographic studies could still be used to support the old means-ends paradigm rather than the preferable ecological paradigm (Goodlad, 1978).

And this, I think, brings me full circle: back to the assertion that research is exploration; a search for insight and understanding in a world which is <u>not</u> characterized by linear rationality at all but by uncertainty, relativity, and chance.

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